

Claims:

1. A message processing system for preparing a plurality of messages to be distributed to recipients, the system comprising:

a consolidator module receiving data corresponding to the plurality of messages, the consolidator module programmed to consolidate multiple of the plurality of messages into a single message package, the consolidator module consolidating the messages based on first criteria;

a distributor module coupled to the consolidator module and receiving a data stream containing consolidated message packages, the distributor module programmed to determine optimal routing for production of message packages based on second criteria.

2. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module is programmed to format the consolidated message packages in accordance with the determined optimal routing.

3. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the recipients are customers and the consolidator module and the distributor are coupled to a customer relationship management system, the customer relationship management system determining at least some of the first and second criteria.

4. The message processing system of claim 3 wherein the customer relationship management system determines a template for message packages and the template is transmitted to the consolidator module for forming the message packages.
5. The message processing system of claim 4 wherein the template includes marketing content developed by marketing tools in the customer relationship management system.
6. The message processing system of claim 3 wherein the first and second criteria include marketing business rules determined by the customer relationship management system.
7. The message processing system of claim 6 wherein the marketing rules include a rule that messages that include particular marketing content may, or may not, be consolidated.
8. The message processing system of claim 3 wherein the first and/or second criteria include customer preferences.

9. The message processing system of claim 8 wherein the first criteria includes a customer preference on whether or not consolidation is desired.

10. The message processing system of claim 8 wherein the first criteria includes a customer preference on whether or not householding is desired.

11. The message processing system of claim 8 wherein the second criteria includes a customer preference of physical mail or electronic delivery.

12. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the consolidator module and the distributor are coupled to a statement applications processing module, the statement applications processing module determining at least some of the first and second criteria.

13. The message processing system of claim 12 wherein the statement applications processing module provides message business data to the consolidator module for forming the message packages.

14. The message processing system of claim 12 wherein the statement applications processing module receives data from an automated data factory having a plurality of mail production sites.

15. The message processing system of claim 14 wherein the distributor module receives postal delivery metrics, and wherein the distributor module calculates transit times for message delivery from the plurality of mail production sites.

16. The message processing system of claim 14 wherein the second criteria includes quality requirements and wherein the distributor module receives service and quality metrics corresponding to the plurality of mail production sites, and wherein the distributor module routes message packages based on sites meeting the quality requirements.

17. The message processing system of claim 12 wherein the first and second criteria include sender rules received from the statement applications processing module.

18. The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the first criteria include a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be consolidated.

19. The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the first criteria include a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be householded.

20. The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the second criteria include a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be electronically delivered.

21. The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize time for delivery of messages to recipients, and whereby the consolidator module and distributor module form and route message packages in order to minimize time for delivery.

22. The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to maximize throughput of message packages, and whereby the consolidator module and distributor module form and route message packages in order to maximize throughput.

23. The message processing system of claim 17 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize mail production costs, and whereby the

consolidator module and distributor module form and route message packages in order to minimize mail production costs.

24. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the consolidator selects messages for consolidation from the plurality of messages based on the messages including a same delivery address.

25. The message processing system of claim 24 wherein the consolidator selects messages for consolidation based on messages having due dates proximal in time.

26. The message processing system of claim 25 wherein due dates of messages selected for consolidation are adjusted by the consolidator module to match.

27. The message processing system of claim 25 wherein the consolidator module determines whether a customer preference authorizes consolidation for a particular message, and whereby consolidation is disallowed by the consolidator module if there is no authorization.

28. The message processing system of claim 27 wherein, if the customer preference does not authorize consolidation, the consolidator generates content to be included in the message that describes benefits of consolidation.

29. The message processing system of claim 25 wherein the consolidator module determines whether a customer preference authorizes householding for a particular message, and whereby householding is disallowed by the consolidator module if there is no authorization.

30. The message processing system of claim 29 wherein, if the customer preference does not authorize householding, the consolidator generates content to be included in the message that describes benefits of householding.

31. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on real time site production data.

32. The message processing system of claim 31 wherein the distributor module determines whether a site or a machine at a site is non-operational, and wherein the second criteria include a failover site or channel designation, and whereby the failover site or channel designation is used for optimal routing instead of the non-operational site or machine.

33. The message processing system of claim 31 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on real time costs of site operation.

34. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on historical site production data.

35. The message processing system of claim 34 wherein the distributor module, in determining optimal routing, determines whether quality improvements can be made over past performance.

36. The message processing system of claim 34 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on historical costs of site operation.

37. The message processing system of claim 1 wherein the distributor module determines optimal site routing based on postal service delivery time data for respective sites.

38. A method for processing and preparing a plurality of messages to be distributed to recipients, the method comprising:

receiving data corresponding to the plurality of messages;

consolidating multiple of the plurality of messages into single message packages, said consolidating of the messages into consolidated message packages based on first criteria;

determining optimal routing for production of message packages based on second criteria;

transmitting the message packages to one or more of a plurality of message production sites based on the optimal routing.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal routing includes designating electronic presentment of the message packages and the step of transmitting includes electronic presentment of the message packages.

40. The method of claim 38 further comprising the step of formatting the consolidated message packages in accordance with the determined optimal routing.

41. The method of claim 38 further comprising the step of determining at least some of the first and second criteria through a customer relationship management system.

42. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of determining a template for message packages with the customer relationship management system.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein the step of determining the template comprises including marketing content developed by marketing tools in the customer relationship management system.

44. The method of claim 41 wherein the step of determining the first and second criteria includes marketing business rules determined by the customer relationship management system.

45. The method of claim 44 including a step of preventing messages from being consolidated based on the marketing rules that include a rule that messages that include particular marketing content may, or may not, be consolidated.

46. The method of claim 41 further including gathering customer preference data and including it in the first and/or second criteria.

47. The method of claim 46 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled based on the first criteria which includes a customer preference on whether or not consolidation is desired.

48. The method of claim 46 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled based on the first criteria which includes a customer preference on whether or not householding is desired.

49. The method of claim 46 wherein the step of determining optimal routing is based on the second criteria which includes a customer preference of physical mail or electronic delivery.

50. The method of claim 38 further including the step of determining at least some of the first and second criteria with a statement applications processing module.

51. The method of claim 50 further including the step of providing message business data from the statement applications processing module for forming the message packages.

52. The method of claim 50 further including the step of receiving data from an automated data factory controlling the plurality of mail production sites, and using said automated data factory data for determining said optimal routing.

53. The method of claim 52 further including receiving postal delivery metrics, and the step of determining optimal routing includes calculating transit times for message delivery from the plurality of mail production sites.

54. The method of claim 52 further including the steps of
receiving service and quality metrics corresponding to the plurality of mail production sites;
including quality requirements in the second criteria; and
determining the optimal routing of message packages based on sites meeting the quality requirements.

55. The method of claim 50 wherein the step of determining at least some of the first and second criteria includes incorporating sender rules received from the statement applications processing module.

56. The method of claim 55 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled by the first criteria which includes a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be consolidated.

57. The method of claim 55 wherein the step of consolidating is controlled by the first criteria which includes a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be househanded.

58. The method of claim 55 wherein the step of determining optimal routing is based on a sender rule that messages that include particular business content may, or may not, be electronically delivered.

59. The method of claim 55 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize time for delivery of messages to recipients, and the steps of consolidating and determining optimal routing are controlled to form and route message packages in order to minimize time for delivery.

60. The method of claim 55 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to maximize throughput of message packages, and the steps of consolidating and determining optimal routing are controlled to form and route message packages in order to maximize throughput.

61. The method of claim 55 wherein the sender rules include a requirement to minimize mail production costs, and wherein the steps of consolidating and determining optimal routing are controlled to form and route message packages in order to minimize mail production costs.

63. The method of claim 38 wherein the step of consolidating includes selecting messages for consolidation from the plurality of messages based on the messages having a same delivery address.

64. The method of claim 63 wherein the step of consolidating includes selecting messages for consolidation based on messages having due dates proximal in time.

65. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of consolidating includes adjusting the due dates of messages selected for consolidation so that consolidated messages have the same due dates.

66. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of consolidating includes determining whether a customer preference authorizes consolidating for a

particular message, and whereby consolidating is disallowed if there is no authorization.

67. The method of claim 66 wherein, if the customer preference does not authorize consolidation, further including a step of generating content to be included in the message describing benefits of consolidation.

68. The method of claim 64 wherein the step of consolidating includes determining whether a customer preference authorizes householding for a particular message, and whereby householding is disallowed if there is no authorization.

69. The method of claim 68 wherein, if the customer preference does not authorize householding, further including a step of generating content to be included in the message describing benefits of householding.

70. The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal routing is based on real time site production data received from the plurality of message production sites.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein the step of determining optimal routing includes identifying whether a site or a machine at a site is non-operational, and wherein the second criteria include a failover site or channel designation, and whereby the failover site or channel designation is used for optimal routing instead of the non-operational site or machine.

72. The method of claim 70 wherein step of determining optimal routing is based on real time costs of site operation.

73. The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal site routing is based on historical site production data.

74. The method of claim 73 the step of determining optimal routing includes determining whether quality improvements can be made over past site performance.

75. The method of claim 73 wherein the step of determining optimal site routing is based on historical costs of site operation.

76. The method of claim 38 wherein the step of determining optimal site routing is based on postal service delivery time data for respective sites.